



WESTERN HEMISPHERE DEFENSE POLICY STATEMENT

October 2012

| Report Documentation Page | | | | Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188 | |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------|
| Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. | | | | | |
| 1. REPORT DATE OCT 2012 | | 2. REPORT TYPE | | 3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2012 to 00-00-2012 | |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Western Hemisphere Defense Policy Statement | | | | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5b. GRANT NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER | |
| 6. AUTHOR(S) | | | | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5e. TASK NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER | |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Department of Defense,1000 Defense Pentagon,Washington,DC,20301-1000 | | | | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER | |
| 9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) | | | | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) | |
| | | | | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) | |
| 12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited | | | | | |
| 13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES | | | | | |
| 14. ABSTRACT | | | | | |
| 15. SUBJECT TERMS | | | | | |
| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: | | | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR) | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES 14 | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON |
| a. REPORT unclassified | b. ABSTRACT unclassified | c. THIS PAGE unclassified | | | |

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

A REMARKABLE TRANSFORMATION 1

HEMISPHERIC DEFENSE IN CONTEXT 1

Governance and Development Challenges..... 3

Challenges Remain 3

THE IMPERATIVE FOR PARTNERSHIP 4

Strengthening National Institutions..... 5

Strengthening our Capacity to Respond.....5

Defense Modernization and Dialogue.....6

Integrating Capacity 7

Organized Crime, Terrorism, and Cyber Issues7

Conducting and Supporting Peace Operations.....8

Humanitarian & Civic Assistance.....8

System of Defense Cooperation 9

CONCLUSION.....10

FOREWORD

I believe that in the Americas today, there are no senior partners and there are no junior partners, there are only equal partners. Of course, equal partnerships, in turn, demand a sense of shared responsibility. We have obligations to each other. And today, the United States is working with the nations of this hemisphere to meet our responsibilities in several key areas.

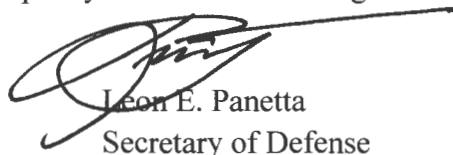
*President Barack Obama
Santiago, Chile, March 21, 2011*

In January, 2012, I released “Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense,” providing Defense Strategic Guidance for Department of Defense planning through the next decade. This guidance recognized that changes in the global security environment and our fiscal circumstances required a reshaping of our defense priorities. As we draw down from a decade of conflict, continue to pursue al Qaeda and its leadership, and prepare for a complex and uncertain future security environment, our nation faces serious fiscal challenges at home.

In establishing DoD’s priorities, the President made clear his determination “that we meet the challenges of this moment responsibly and that we emerge even stronger in a manner that preserves American global leadership...”¹ In accordance with the President’s direction, the Defense Strategic Guidance set forth that the U.S. military will continue to contribute to security globally, particularly through an emphasis on building partnership capacity around the world to share the costs and responsibilities of that global leadership, including in our own hemisphere.

In the Western Hemisphere a remarkable transformation has taken place. Countries are doing more than ever before to advance peace and security both within and beyond their borders. Their efforts and vision provide the United States with a historic opportunity to renew and strengthen our defense partnerships in the region. In the Western Hemisphere we will seek to be the security partner of choice by reinvigorating our defense partnerships and pursuing new ones on the basis of mutual respect and mutual interest consistent with President Obama’s approach to the region.

DoD will support robust inter-American defense cooperation. Whenever possible, DoD will develop innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches to achieve our shared security objectives, relying on training, advisory capabilities, exercises, and rotational presence. This policy statement provides the framework on which we seek to build partnerships to enhance bilateral, sub-regional, and hemispheric capacity to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.



Leon E. Panetta
Secretary of Defense

¹ “Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense,” p.1, President Obama’s cover letter.

A REMARKABLE TRANSFORMATION

The United States is at a strategic inflection point. As directed in the Secretary of Defense's January 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance, and as we responsibly draw down from operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and take steps to protect our nation's economic vitality, the U.S. military will, of necessity, rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, reflecting the President's direction to preserve American global leadership, the Strategic Guidance also directs that the U.S. military will continue to contribute to security globally. The Department of Defense (DoD) will seek to build partnership capacity elsewhere in the world to share the costs and responsibilities required to ensure global peace and security, including in the Americas.

This Western Hemisphere Defense Policy Statement outlines DoD's roles and missions to advance the President's vision and DoD's policy for the Americas. Within the Western Hemisphere, we will seek to be the security partner of choice, enhancing existing partnerships and pursuing new ones with nations whose interests and viewpoints are merging into a common vision of freedom, stability, and prosperity. In a resource constrained environment, DoD will focus its security cooperation efforts in the hemisphere to enhance partnering bilaterally and regionally, based on shared security interests. Specifically, DoD will support the role of defense institutions in addressing the threats of the 21st century, help partners develop mature and professional forces, and promote integration and interoperability. Strengthening multilateral linkages and mechanisms for defense cooperation will also be a focus of our efforts. These priorities will steer DoD efforts in the Western Hemisphere.

This approach acknowledges that no single nation alone can address the multifaceted and overlapping challenges of the 21st century. Developing solutions to address these challenges requires collaboration across and within governments and militaries at all levels. This approach also acknowledges that governments throughout the hemisphere are increasingly demonstrating their willingness to do more, directly and indirectly, in support of regional and global peace and security. The increasing desire and capability of many partners to become exporters of security presents promising opportunities and signals a new era of defense cooperation in the Hemisphere. Through this policy statement, the United States underscores its commitment to reinvigorate our defense partnerships based on mutual interests, respect, and shared responsibility to protect the citizens and states of this hemisphere.

HEMISPHERIC DEFENSE IN CONTEXT

DoD recognizes the almost unanimous commitment by nations of the Western Hemisphere to strengthen the capacities of their armed forces, contribute to regional and international peace and security, and address common problems based on a mutual understanding of the threats, while respecting international norms and behaviors. One of the key tenets of the Secretary's strategic guidance to DoD is direction to build innovative defense partnerships, particularly with those nations that have committed their forces to promote regional and global stability.

Just a decade ago, many nations in the region lacked the capacity to help their neighbors and the international community to address common challenges. However, today many countries from the hemisphere have chosen, based on their nation's interests, to deploy their enhanced defense capacities, in some cases built in partnership with the United States and other nations, to provide significant contributions to international security.

Colombian security forces are sharing aviation, anti-kidnapping, and counter-narcotics expertise with countries in the Americas and Africa. Salvadoran trainers are supporting the Afghan National Security Forces and deployed 11 rotations of personnel to support the Government of Iraq. Since the turn of the 21st century, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay have contributed to or led multi-national security operations and United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions around the globe.

As security forces gain and share experience operating outside their own borders, they are also regularly working together through regional cooperation efforts and achieving unprecedented synergy. We are seeing remarkable transformation through the establishment of formal bilateral, sub-regional, and multilateral defense partnerships; a picture emerges of an interconnected network – a system of defense cooperation. Collective efforts by these defense partners at the bilateral, regional, or multilateral level are demonstrating a positive impact on regional and global peace and security and reflect the new realities of defense cooperation in the hemisphere.

Working with Canada and Mexico, DoD remains prepared to deter and defeat direct threats to our homeland. We partner with Canada on regional security issues such as an evolving Arctic, and look to strengthen an increasingly cooperative security partnership with Mexico. The United States, Canada, and Mexico are working trilaterally to address narcotics trafficking and natural disasters through the North American Defense Ministerial process.

The Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) sub-regional partnership, with assistance from the United States, has demonstrated new standards for multinational cooperation and collective problem-solving to reduce illicit trafficking and improve citizen security. The seven countries of Central America, in collaboration with the Central American Integration System, have developed their own regional security strategy which is supported by the U.S. Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI).

Leaders from Colombia and the United States are building on a decade of successful partnership in defining a more strategic security relationship through the High Level Strategic Security Dialogue. We are also encouraging regional cooperation to enhance security and stability in South America, welcoming efforts by Brazil and partners to establish economic and security mechanisms, such as the South American Defense Council, which help build interdependence and further integrate partner forces.

Countries in the hemisphere are also looking beyond this region from the Asia-Pacific region to Africa. Because of our mutual interests such as freedom of navigation and overflight and other internationally lawful uses of the seas related to these freedoms, security and awareness in the maritime and air domains, and prevention of illegal trade in drug precursors or other goods, we

will continue to identify opportunities for collaboration to develop partnerships that extend beyond our hemisphere. This approach not only strengthens U.S. partnerships in our hemisphere, but also enhances the relevance of those partnerships in supporting U.S. global priorities, including the Asia-Pacific rebalance.

These regional and sub-regional partnerships reflect a new era of defense cooperation based on a mutual understanding of the range of security challenges and interests. Institutional relationships at the hemispheric level ensure respect for sovereignty and international norms. These norms and practices are evolving because of a necessity to act collectively and share the burden. As hemispheric military institutions increase their capacities and become more professional, the United States will seek to leverage military-to-military relationships for common good.

Governance and Development Challenges

This era of transformation in defense cooperation and professionalization came about in the context of ongoing governance and development challenges. Although defense institutions have transformed their roles and missions, essential elements of democracy including rule of law, transparency, and accountability lag behind in some countries. Almost all countries in the hemisphere now elect their leaders, but electoral systems are sometimes manipulated to benefit entrenched groups, and corruption and ineffective judicial systems hamper the ability of governments to earn and keep the trust of citizens.

Even though some countries in the hemisphere enjoy strong economic growth, more than 30 percent of the population of the Caribbean and Latin America still live below the poverty line, and income distribution is the most unequal in the world. Social exclusion of people on the basis of ethnicity or race handicaps some countries by denying significant portions of the citizenry the opportunity to participate as full members of society. U.S. and foreign partners in security cooperation discussions are mindful that security, economic and social development, and responsible governance are bound together inextricably. Given these conditions, our defense cooperation must complement bilateral and regional development efforts to increase economic opportunity, foster social inclusion, rule of law, and respect for human rights.

Nonetheless, DoD will remain cognizant that countries' efforts to reform their defense institutions, particularly through acquisition of defense articles and technology not tied to legitimate defense requirements, can create a destabilizing influence in the Hemisphere and erode trust between nations. Further, the failure to develop and implement proper safeguards and controls, including effective physical security and stockpile management, can result in the transfer of weapons into the hands of those who seek to destabilize the very governments such materiel was intended to protect.

Challenges Remain

The predominant hemispheric security challenges no longer stem principally from state-on-state conflict, right-wing paramilitaries, or left-wing insurgents. With unprecedented progress in defense cooperation, there is broad consensus on the nature of the threats facing this hemisphere. Today's threats to regional peace and stability stem from the spread of narcotics and other forms

of illicit trafficking, gangs, and terrorism, the effects of which can be exacerbated by natural disasters and uneven economic opportunity. Natural disasters pose annual threats to many states in the hemisphere. Nations are also confronting the 21st century threats in cyberspace. These threats to national interests are shared and do not respect sovereign boundaries. It is in our mutual interest to join together to develop regional civilian capacity to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat these threats from non-state actors.

However, the capacity of national civilian authorities, including law enforcement, throughout the hemisphere is uneven. In some countries civilian authorities have been overwhelmed by the magnitude of response required by the security challenges they face. This gap in civilian capacity has led some national leaders to expand their reliance on the armed forces to supplement law enforcement and provide humanitarian support. Some militaries lack sufficient legal foundations, doctrine, training, equipment, and procedures to promote cooperation across their governments and many are ill-prepared to fulfill these temporary roles.

The use of the military to perform civil law enforcement cannot be a long-term solution. However, as other U.S. security cooperation efforts work to build the capacity of civil authorities and partner nation law enforcement, DoD will continue to support defense partners to give them the best opportunity to succeed in bridging these gaps.

THE IMPERATIVE FOR PARTNERSHIP

In order to advance security and prosperity in the 21st century, we must maintain and even enhance our military strength. But I also believe that the United States must place even greater strategic emphasis on building the security capabilities of others. We must be bold enough to adopt a more collaborative approach to security both within the United States government and among allies, partners, and multilateral organizations.

"Building Partnership in the 21st Century"
Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta,
U.S. Institute of Peace, June 28, 2012

This defense strategy provides guidelines through which our defense partnerships and shared approaches to regional security can flourish. This approach helps the United States and its partners focus limited resources on programs that increase individual partner capacity to address their own security challenges while contributing to global peace and security efforts.

For its part, DoD will continue to support the growth of mature, professional defense institutions at strategic, operational, and tactical levels to ensure partner forces have the capability, when called upon, to support both the legitimate sovereign needs of the state and the security of its citizens. We will promote integration and interoperability between and among defense and security forces to safeguard our mutual interests. DoD will prioritize the constructive evolution of multilateral defense cooperation, and those institutional mechanisms that embody this

cooperation, as critical elements required for building consensus on shared challenges and opportunities for collaboration.

We recognize that this transformation in defense cooperation requires DoD to develop innovative partnership approaches. Our partnerships must be flexible, agile, responsive to the desires of the partner country, and able to transform as nations' militaries grow in capacity. In addition, this policy recognizes that, for many of the security challenges identified, partner nations or civilian U.S. Government departments and agencies have the lead. DoD must demonstrate through its actions the benefits of long-term partnership with the United States, without creating dependency or an imbalance between defense and civilian authorities. Our way ahead reinforces that, in addressing those challenges, the department will ensure that military support for the mission remains transparent, respectful of human rights and the rule of law, and supports the continued consolidation of democratic values in support of civilian authorities.

Strengthening National Institutions

Mature and professional defense institutions are foundations to ensure the safety of the state and its citizens. Given the positive trajectory of democratic and defense institutions in the hemisphere, now is the time to consolidate gains achieved in defense modernization. Our emphasis on education, training, and relationships is not new, but more critical than ever.

Our goal will be to implement programs that emphasize a whole-of-government response to defense and security challenges and focus on both institutions and individuals. At the strategic level, we will support partner efforts to build and manage efficient, effective, and accountable defense ministries and institutions. This will require both periodic and sustained engagement between partner Ministry of Defense officials and U.S. subject matter experts, upon request and where appropriate, in support of jointly developed action plans.

Strengthening our Capacity to Respond

Educating and training individual civilian and uniformed defense officials and other security sector personnel are among the most important collaborative opportunities available to the United States and our partner nations. These programs are intended to develop individual capacity and professionalism, while enhancing national institutions and capacity and complementing regional development, and are an important priority for DoD.

Individual, unit, and ministry level instruction, advice, and support provided through seminars, workshops, personnel exchanges, training missions, advisors, and DoD educational institutions contribute to the development of professional and technical capacity and capability among regional security providers. DoD civilian and military engagements with partners are intended to foster confidence and cooperation through relationship building and the sharing of information and best practices. Taken as a whole, these programs strengthen civil-military relations, develop strong and sustainable international relationships, and advance mutual approaches to common security challenges.

At the individual level, DoD educational institutions like the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) provide professional education and training opportunities to eligible personnel within the context of the democratic principles set forth in the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS), while fostering confidence and cooperation among the participating nations and promoting democratic values, and respect for human rights. Through the International Military Education and Training program, the United States is able to invite the best individual candidates and rising leaders to participate in long-term educational programs in the United States.

At the institutional level, the Defense Institution Reform Initiative (DIRI) supports partner efforts to build and manage efficient, effective, and accountable defense ministries through periodic, sustained engagement between partner Ministry of Defense officials and U.S. subject matter experts. Similarly, the Ministry of Defense Advisors program can complement DIRI's engagements by providing additional advisory support. The Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies (CHDS) provides education and conducts outreach, research and knowledge-sharing activities on defense and international security policy-making with military and civilian leaders of the Western Hemisphere. These programs are designed to advance international security policy and defense decision-making processes, foster partnerships, and promote effective civil-military relations in democratic societies.

DoD will rely on all of these types of programs to assist partner nations in developing accountable, professional, and transparent defense establishments that can manage, sustain, and efficiently employ their forces. In addition to ongoing efforts by the National Defense University, CHDS, WHINSEC, the Defense Institute for International Legal Studies, and other DoD educational entities, DoD will explore new ways to provide more effective and comprehensive defense policy planning and advisory support to our partners, particularly with military and civilian leaders at the ministry level in an effort to support the improvement of partner nation defense institutions at all levels.

Defense Modernization and Dialogue

In addition to strengthening national institutions through education and relationship building, DoD will assist in strengthening capacity by helping to modernize equipment used by defense forces. DoD will continue to work closely with other U.S. departments and agencies and partner-nations to determine the appropriate defense articles and defense-related materials and services needed to improve partner nation capabilities and to enhance interoperability with U.S. military forces.

DoD will continue to furnish defense articles and services on a grant or sale basis, through Foreign Military Financing, Foreign Military Sales, and Direct Commercial Sales, to build capability, interoperability, and facilitate direct contact with U.S. firms and the U.S. military. Such mechanisms provide means for the United States to build relationships and increase partners' ability to contribute to regional security and stability. To protect our mutual investments, the United States will institutionalize a culture of maintenance and sustainment that maximizes the operational lifespan of critical defense systems and ensures that operators are properly trained to use and maintain equipment.

DoD believes that the defense modernization process is driven by formal and informal dialogues that increase our mutual understanding and confidence in defense. Civilian officials, leaders from the Joint Staff, and our Geographic Combatant Commanders have all initiated a range of bilateral and regional dialogues throughout the hemisphere and will continue to do so where appropriate. The United States is pursuing or has concluded bilateral Defense Cooperation Agreements with several partners. At a sub-regional level, partners in Central America and the Caribbean have engaged in a process of dialogue and collective action intended to leverage the efforts of multiple partners to confront transnational threats and natural disasters. Examples of such dialogues include CARSI and CBSI which promote partnership and interoperability.

Integrating Capacity

DoD will assist partner security forces by enhancing interoperability and improving capacity and capability to respond in those missions where there is near consensus throughout the region for collective action. This approach also considers the transnational nature of today's threats and takes into account the increased institutional capacity throughout the hemisphere to respond. Countering narco-trafficking, weapons proliferation, and terrorism, responding to the emerging threats in cyberspace, support to civil authorities in response to humanitarian crises and natural disasters, and support to partner-nation law enforcement and military organizations are legitimate missions that support broader whole-of-government efforts to provide citizen safety and security.

Organized Crime, Terrorism, and Cyber Issues

DoD serves as the lead U.S. agency for the detection and monitoring of the aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs into the United States. Joint Interagency Task Force-South, in particular, integrates and synchronizes U.S. interagency and multilateral counter-drug operations in the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and the eastern Pacific Ocean as well as cooperating with counter-drug efforts in other parts of the world. The department also provides substantial logistical, communications, engineering, infrastructure, training, analytical, and related support to other U.S. Government and foreign counterdrug operations.

Although DoD primarily cooperates with foreign countries' military forces, it also will continue to work, upon request, with law enforcement and other security services to counter transnational threats. This is especially the case in countries – such as in some parts of Central America – that face such extreme threats from crime that they have increased their reliance on military forces to support law enforcement. Police professionalization and capacity building are structural challenges that will take years to overcome. As the United States and our partners support efforts to restore public safety by building police and justice sector capacity, we must respect countries' decisions to have military forces assume non-traditional roles while emphasizing respect for civilian authority, human rights, and the rule of law.

DoD must remain vigilant against the potential for terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in this hemisphere, as these are among the highest priority threats to the United States. In the event global-reach terrorist organizations and state sponsors of terrorism establish a sufficiently sophisticated presence in the hemisphere, so as to pose a more direct terrorist threat

to the United States or our partners, DoD will be prepared to work with other U.S. Government departments and agencies and with international partners to confront these threats, to include deepening security partnerships, applying counterterrorism tools and capabilities appropriately, and building a culture of resilience while always adhering to our core values.

All nations in the region face a cyber security threat and, as with other transnational threats, must work together to determine how defense institutions can help address this challenge. The “Department of Defense Strategy for Operating in Cyberspace” calls for DoD to build strong relationships with key allies and international partners to address such challenges and engagement efforts are already underway in this hemisphere.

Conducting and Supporting Peace Operations

UN peacekeeping operations contribute to global and regional security by protecting civilians and creating stability. This role has become significant as UN operations have been called on to address some of the world’s most challenging security situations, including some in the hemisphere. No region has focused better attention on this issue – by engaging, addressing, and improving UN peacekeeping – than countries in the Western Hemisphere. Working through the UN and with our partners, we seek to develop new tools, and update old ones, to address challenges faced in UN operations more effectively, such as the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI). By helping train, equip, and build capacity to perform peace support operations, GPOI assists partners in meeting their national objectives in support of UN and regional peacekeeping. Further, GPOI is shaping new partnerships with countries that train for and co-deploy to peace support operations with third parties.

These and similar efforts have a multiplier effect throughout the hemisphere. For example, DoD will continue to rely on U.S. National Guard units, through the effective State Partnership Program, to play a pivotal role training and working with defense forces of partner countries that in turn provide support to civil authorities, regional security efforts, or global peacekeeping missions. Senior U.S. leaders will remain engaged with their counterparts from Colombia, Chile, Mexico, and Canada to work more closely in support of Central American nations’ efforts to implement a regional security strategy.

Humanitarian & Civic Assistance

Although DoD humanitarian and civic assistance activities have traditionally focused on supporting our interagency partners in the delivery of aid to relieve or reduce human suffering, we are committed to improving our partners’ ability to confront these challenges. *New Horizons* and *Beyond the Horizon* are examples of effective DoD-sponsored exercises that involve the construction and renovation of infrastructure such as schools, clinics, community centers, roads, and water wells to improve partners’ ability to provide services to their populace.

Medical capability team deployments and readiness exercises involving teams of doctors, nurses, and dentists continue to provide general and specialized health services to partner nation citizens and improve the public health and preventative medicine skills of local providers. Exercises

such as the annual *Fuerzas Aliadas Humanitarias* (Allied Humanitarian Forces) help improve regional information sharing and interoperability among relief forces during disasters.

Humanitarian concerns and uneven distribution of response capacities and capabilities support the concept that disaster response should be a responsibility shared by countries such as United States, Brazil, Canada, Chile, and Mexico since they possess significant experience in coordinating and supporting hemispheric response efforts. With unmatched logistics capacity and trained and equipped personnel, military forces provided critical support during the initial stages of the Haiti earthquake relief effort. As military forces often have a unique capability to respond within life saving time requirements, and countries understand the increased need for collective action, DoD will continue to promote stronger cooperation between governments and among defense institutions to respond more effectively to those humanitarian crises.

System of Defense Cooperation

The United States, through its participation at the OAS and through each of our military-to-military engagements, will promote a strong defense system of cooperation that seeks to address the complex challenges of the 21st century. Although the foundations of this system are a series of instruments and agreements, the system itself is a sum of evolving relationships that emphasize collective action and cooperation on defense and security matters. We will work to reform and leverage existing institutions to realize greater efficiencies and unity of purpose in addressing those issues that affect each country in the hemisphere.

The United States will support those activities that promote the ability of multilateral defense institutions to play a stronger role in supporting the system. This commitment is based on the principles of partnership and shared responsibility and is carried out consistent with the Inter-American framework of the Declaration on Security in the Americas. The common thread linking all of the initiatives, programs, training, and exercises is that they all strengthen partnerships and build capacities; whether civilian or military, institutional, operational or strategic, humanitarian, counter-drug, or peacekeeping in nature, they contribute to our partners' ability to export their unique skills and lessons learned throughout the hemisphere. These efforts are based on principles of shared responsibility, mutual trust, and respect for sovereign independence, and build confidence. This is the future of hemispheric defense cooperation.

At the hemispheric level, the biennial Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas encourages Ministers of Defense within the Western Hemisphere to examine current and emerging defense and security issues; debate and exchange knowledge, ideas, and experiences; and discuss issues of common interest to increase cooperation and integration on defense and security matters. The Inter-American Defense Board, the oldest multilateral military organization in the world, unites defense officials within the OAS to develop collaborative approaches on defense and security issues facing the Americas.

The military services also participate in hemispheric service-specific conferences such as the Conference of American Armies, the Inter-American Naval Conference, and the System of Cooperation among the American Air Forces. These conferences have institutionalized secretariats comprised of multinational leadership and staff and remain the premier fora through

which hemispheric service chiefs engage in dialogue on peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance/disaster response, science and technology, civil-military cooperation, the environment, and emerging threats.

CONCLUSION

During the past decade, a remarkable transformation has taken place in the Western Hemisphere. Across the region, countries are doing more than they ever have before to advance peace and security within and beyond their borders. Their efforts are promoting security and stability not only in the Americas, but across the globe and provide the United States with a historic opportunity to renew and strengthen our defense partnerships across the region.

*“Working Together Key to Western Hemisphere's Success”
Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta
The Miami Herald, May 13, 2012*

DoD seeks to be the partner of choice and a key enabler of strong regional defense cooperation in the Western Hemisphere. The January 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance requires a dynamic evolution of our defense policy in the Western Hemisphere to achieve the security goals we share with regional partners. A remarkable transformation of partner readiness and willingness to address the challenges of the 21st century, both throughout and beyond the hemisphere, augurs well for renewed U.S. commitment to innovative partnerships and shared responsibility. The Department will focus on strengthening national defense capacity, fostering regional integration and interoperability, and the constructive evolution of multilateral defense cooperation.

The key to achieving both U.S. security objectives, and those of our partners, is strong, constructive, thoughtful leadership. The United States will defend and promote its strategic interests throughout the hemisphere within legal frameworks, consistent with our national values, and respecting the values of our partners. We will support those countries that assert leadership and assume responsibility in pursuit of common interests. We will encourage other nations to follow their example.

However, cooperation and partnership are not ends in themselves – they must achieve results in countering shared threats and violent extremism; preventing and resolving conflict; and fostering greater institutional capacity and confidence between and among defense and security institutions. Achieving these results will sustain the expansion of democratic ideals, participation, and prosperity of the hemisphere. A strong system of defense cooperation will only be as strong as those national and international institutions that support it.

DoD will support the role of defense institutions in addressing the threats of the 21st century, help partners develop mature and professional forces, and promote integration and interoperability. Strengthening multilateral linkages and mechanisms for defense cooperation will also be a focus of our efforts. Together, these two lines of effort will steer DoD in the Western Hemisphere as we strive to remain the partner of choice in helping safeguard our mutual interests for the next generation.

